

## 1.

Our reading today is Joshua 5:1-12 page 219 in the church Bibles. It will appear on the screen as well so you can choose where you read from.

**2.** <sup>1</sup> *Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until they<sup>1</sup> had crossed over, their hearts melted in fear and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.*

*5:2–9 All Israel circumcised at Gilgal*

**3.** <sup>2</sup> *At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.”<sup>3</sup> So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth<sup>2</sup>.*

**4.** <sup>4</sup> *Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the wilderness on the way after leaving Egypt.<sup>5</sup> All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness during the journey from Egypt had not.<sup>6</sup> The Israelites had moved about in the wilderness forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they*

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<sup>1</sup> 5:1 Another textual tradition we

<sup>2</sup> 5:3 Gibeath Haaraloth means the hill of foreskins.

*had not obeyed the LORD. For the LORD had sworn to them that they would not see the land he had solemnly promised their ancestors to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

**5.**<sup>7</sup> *So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.* **6.**<sup>8</sup> *And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed.*

<sup>9</sup> *Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal<sup>3</sup> to this day.*

*5:10-12 Manna stops*

**7.**<sup>10</sup> *On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover.<sup>11</sup> The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain.<sup>12</sup> The manna stopped the day after<sup>4</sup> they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.*

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<sup>3</sup> 5:9 *Gilgal* sounds like the Hebrew for *roll*.

<sup>4</sup> 5:12 Or *the day*

**8.** So the narrative divides into three sections

The situation report. vv1-2

Circumcision and the promised land vv3-9

Manna stops vv10-12

**9.** But we are going to concentrate on three questions about us this morning.

What is your 'Promised Land'? Have you arrived?

What is your circumcision? Are you circumcised?

What is your manna / milk and honey? What are you feeding on?

Step back a bit and get the context. The children of Israel, as they were called, had moved up the Jordan valley and soundly beaten a collection of local tribes but avoided battle with others. Moses, their great leader, had died and Joshua had stepped into his shoes. They have just crossed the Jordan! That may not sound so significant but that was a crossing the Rubicon-type event. They were now in the Promised Land! They had a foothold, like the Normandy Landings. But they were far from safe. They had many well established nations hostile to them ahead and behind. So feel the relief of the opening words. The crossing of the Jordan had a deep psychological effect on the locals. The West Bank nations and the Mediterranean coastal nations were fearful of them and therefore did not counter attack. They had some space. And they needed it.

## **10. Question 1 : What is your ‘Promised Land’? Have you arrived?**

So what is the next step? How do you proceed with invading the Promised Land?

We will spend some time in this book and the Promised Land is deeply significant. It remains so for the Jews who in 1948 were given the right to return by British mandate. But we must not confuse the two events.

Joshua was sent by God to drive out nations whose practices were abhorrent to God. The Palestinians in 1948 were a mix of Christians and Muslims who have been driven into exile or given second class citizenship. They have lost their homes, their identity and hope. It remains an open sore in the Middle East.

But returning to Joshua. Please note that they have entered the Promised Land! Crossing the Jordan meant they have arrived! But they only had a bridge head.

They were going to spend a long time invading and taking over the Promised Land. Pockets of Canaanites remained even to David’s day.

**10a** To answer the question **What is your ‘Promised Land’?** we need to step back and view our lives from a spiritual perspective. There was a time, I hope, when you said to Jesus: “Forgive my sins, I receive your salvation. Fill me with your Spirit.” At that

point you crossed the Jordan. You are in the promised land. The death and resurrection of Jesus are past events and complete events. Nothing can take away your salvation because it is based on the promises of God and the complete once and for all atonement sacrifice of Jesus.

**10b** The question then becomes: ‘how far have you got in taking the land that God is giving you.’ IN this case Jesus changes the language from the Promised Land to the kingdom of God. No longer are we looking to enter a land of milk and honey but a kingdom of love , joy and peace. Jesus taught us to seek his kingdom first and foremost and the rest will follow. So our battle is not with Canaanite tribes but lack of faith, idolatry, greed, lust, selfishness, envy and pride. The spiritual battles are in the main battles within. I have a great book on this subject written by John Bunyan. It describes a city of Mansoul and the problems of its history. It is written as an allegory of the Christian life. The battles are with temptation and sin. The glory and triumph is the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Book of Joshua for us is not a blueprint for war against political forces- far from it. Jesus said ‘my kingdom is not of this world so my servants do not fight’. It is a reminder of the struggles of day to day spirituality.

**10c** To complete the overview of your spiritual life, one day you will be in the promised Land. In fact we sing hymns where crossing the Jordan is an expression of death. Jesus describes the promised land as a house. What does Jesus say in John 14: 1-2

You are saved. You are being saved. You will be saved.

So what was the next step? What mattered most ?  
Military action? NO! Building a settlement? They had a well established tent city plan in place.

What mattered was their relationship with God. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, these people were all born in the desert travels. And for reasons not clear, none of them were ever circumcised. So they organised a mass circumcision for ALL the men, youngest to oldest. It was a stone-age society, so they used newly prepared flint knives to ensure clean cutting and infection free healing. So for a week every man was recovering from a very sensitive operation. Leaving the ladies to do all the work! – including guard duties!

Why? Because circumcision is the symbolic act of being part of God's chosen people. Starting with Abraham.

## **11. Question 2: What is your circumcision? Are you circumcised?**

Let's be clear, female circumcision is never ever mentioned in the Bible. Generally, mutilation is condemned in the Bible so male circumcision is an unusual action. But it was a specific tribal identity. It was always clearly identified with children of the covenants from Abraham onwards.

### **11a You are baptised**

The New Covenant does not require circumcision. But Jesus was baptised and he commanded his disciples to baptise. So there is a connection here. If you are going to enter the Kingdom of God, the second step is to be baptised. It is a act of surrender to Jesus, identifying you publically as a child of the New Covenant.

### **11b You 'circumcise your heart'**

But it is critical we receive the warnings of history. Circumcision became a token gesture. In Deuteronomy Moses says to the people: <sup>10: 16</sup> *Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.* Even today, many Jews are circumcised but it makes no difference to their lives. In Jesus' day his cry was against the hypocrisy of being circumcised but not being transformed. Living a version of the law but not having the lifestyle of God's people. Paul countered the Judaisers by telling them to circumcise their hearts in Romans 2: <sup>28</sup> *A person is not a Jew who is one only*

*outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. 29 No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.* In the case of the New Covenant, if baptism does not come from repentance and faith and lead to a changed life, it is nothing. Salvation is based on receiving what God offers in Christ but it should in evitable lead to living a Christ-like life.

## **11c** Your name is written in ‘the Lamb’s Book of Life’

Thirdly Revelation speaks of The Lamb’s Book of Life’ revelation 21:<sup>26</sup> *The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*

So the answer to the question is more to do with what Jesus has done in your life and what you have received from him.

## **12. What is your manna / milk and honey? What are you feeding on?**

### **12a. Jesus is your bread of life.**

Jesus said <sup>35</sup> *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

It was well understood in Jesus' day that feeding the people as in the feeding of the 5000, Jesus was reflecting on the manna in the wilderness. The children of Israel were fed by God all through the 40 years of wandering and now they had arrived at the Promised Land in the time of harvest, they could reap the harvest that God had promised and now given them.

Our lives are wrapped up in Christ. He is our eternal life. So it follows that we need to feed on spiritual food – his words, his actions, his very self. If you believe in three good meals a day then the challenge is are you feeding on Jesus that much or are you neglecting your spiritual life in favour of other things. I was brought up in a family where the daily Bible reading and prayer preceded Breakfast. It was a reminder that what mattered was feeding on Jesus first, although we didn't always feel like we had time for it. But you need to establish time in your day when you can feed your soul.

## **12b.** You frequently remind yourself of that in communion

In the Anglican prayer book the bread of communion is distributed with these words being said “*The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving*” We do it weekly because we think it is good to regularly remind ourselves where our salvation and eternal security lies.

## **12c** Your Bible is the source of your knowledge.

Your spiritual feeding involves listening to God and you do that most through reading his word, the Bible. Whether you read a few verses or a whole chapter or two is not the issue, what matters is that you read and discern what God is saying to you.

## **21d** The Holy Spirit is the source of your spiritual energy

Finally I want to go back to Romans 2:29 *No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.*

You feed on God’s word but to do that you need to be open to the Holy Spirit speaking either through the Bible or directly into your life. Facing the challenges of

each day with God is entirely different to facing it alone. He knows you and the circumstances you are in better than you do. He has a plan for your eternal good.

**13** So you have been saved, you are being saved, you will be saved.

You are born again, your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, you are baptised, and your heart needs to remain circumcised.

Jesus is the manna of life and the food of the promised Land. You need to feed on him to live a healthy spiritual life.

Enter in to the Promised Land. God wants you there to enjoy him forever!